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CLEOPATRA
H. RIDER HAGGARD

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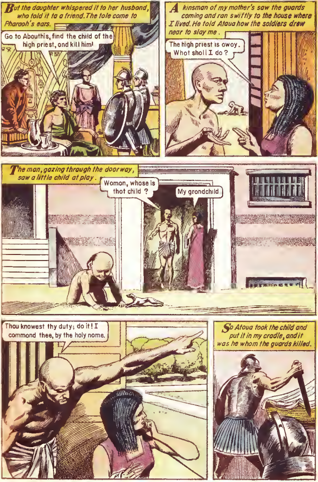
CLEOPATRA

H. RIDER HAGGARD



In the desolate Libyan mountains of Egypt a tomb was recently discovered, among the contents of which were the papyrus rolls whereon this history is written. In them, an Egyptian named Harmachis tells the story of his fall -- the fate of him who forgets his God, his honour and his country.


Here in Abouthis I was born, I, Harmachis, who write this, and on that same day Cleopatra was born also. When I was but a baby, my mother was filled with the spirit of prophecy and placed a golden crown on my brow
Hail to thee, royal child, Pharaoh that shall be. Keep thee pure, and thou shalt rule and deliver Egypt from the Greeks.
But if thou dost fail in thine hour of trial, then may the curse of the gods of Egypt and of thy royal forefathers rest upon thee.
My father, Amenemhat, the high priest, was fearful lest the matter come to the ears of Ptolemy, the Greek ruler of Egypt.
Swear that nothing of this shall pass your lips. Should Ptolemy hear of it, he would send his guards to destroy the child concerning whom such things are prophesied.
Among the company was my mother's old nurse, Atoua, who, by-and-by, spoke of the prophecy to her daughter.
Thou must tell no one.

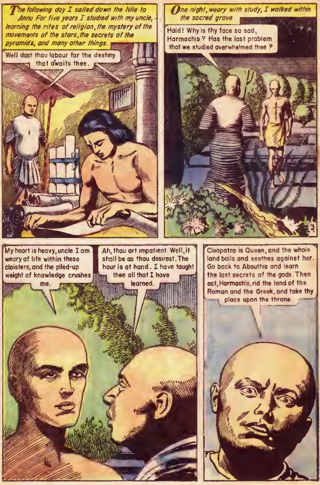

But the daughter whispered it to her husband, who told it to a friend. The tale come to Pharaoh's ears.
Go to Abouthis, find the child of the high priest, and kill him!
A kinsman of my mother's saw the guards coming and ran swiftly to the house where I lived. He told Ataua how the soldiers drew near to slay me.
The high priest is owoy. Whot sholl I do?
The man, gazing through the doorway, saw a little child at play.
Womon, whose is thot child?
My grondchild
Thou knowest thy duty; do it! I commond thee, by the holy nome.
So Ataua took the child and put it in my cradle, and it was he whom the guards killed.


Thereafter, it was given out that the high priest had taken Atoua's grandchild to be as a son to him in place of that Harmachis who was slain. I grew strong and comely. There was no youth of my years in Abouthis who could stand against me in wrestling.
When I had reached my seventeenth year, I much yearned to hunt the lion, but my father forbade it.
Thy life is of too great worth to be so lightly hazarded
However, it chanced that I met a youth who, with others, had slain a lion.
There is a lion now among the rushes by the canal. Wilt thou come and help me slay him, or wilt thou go and sit among the old women?
We went to where the lion lay.
Now, thou boaster, wilt thou lead the way into yonder reeds, or shall I?
Nay, be not so mad! See, I will shoot among the reeds. Perchance it will arouse him.


It chanced that the arrow struck the sleeping lion. He bounded from the shelter of the reeds and stood before us
Courage had left the breast of the boaster. He fled. The lion, with one bound, swept over me and on the boaster's back
He fell down dead. Scarce knowing what I did, I charged and drove my broad spear into the lion's throat.
He roared in pain and leapt straight into the air. He died while I stood and trembled now that all cause of fear had passed.


Then I bethought me that I had disobeyed the word of the high priest, so I went before him.
Why didst thou go forth against the lion when I bade thee not?
How knowest thou that I went forth?
Ah, ignorant child! Was not my spirit with thee and did I not pray to protect thee when the lion sprang?
My son, now learn thou the destiny that the gods of Egypt have given thee to fulfill. Thou and I alone are descended without break from the Pharaoh Nekt-nebf, whom the Persians drove from Egypt.
After the Persians came Alexander the Great, and for nigh upon three hundred years, the Greeks have usurped our crown, defiling our land and corrupting the worship of its gods.
Now the Greek Cleopatra has come to the throne. And mark thou this, my son, the Roman eagle hangs on high, waiting with ready talons till such time as he may fall upon Egypt.


The whole land mutters and murmurs beneath the yoke of the Greek and the shadow of the Roman. Egypt cries aloud for her freedom, and thou, my son, art the appointed way of deliverance.
No harm may touch thee from without. Thyself alone can be thine own enemy. This thou must learn. If thou learn it not, thou shalt fail, and then the curse of Egypt and of Egypt's broken gods be on thee !
Therefore, make thy heart pure and high and strong. Triumph, Harmachis, and in glory thou shalt go. Fail, and woe be on thee !
Meanwhile, thou hast much to learn. Tomorrow thou shalt journey down the Nile to Annu, where thou shalt learn more of our ancient wisdom from thine uncle Sepa, the high priest of Annu.


The following day I sailed down the Nile to Annu. For five years I studied with my uncle, learning the rites of religion, the mystery of the movements of the stars, the secrets of the pyramids, and many other things.
Well dost thou labour for the destiny that awaits thee.
One night, weary with study, I walked within the sacred grove.
Hold! Why is thy face so sad, Harmachis? Has the last problem that we studied overwhelmed thee?
My heart is heavy, uncle. I am weary of life within these cloisters, and the piled-up weight of knowledge crushes me.
Ah, thou art impatient. Well, it shall be as thou desirest. The hour is at hand. I have taught thee all that I have learned.
Cleopatra is Queen, and the whole land boils and seethes against her. Go back to Abouthis and learn the last secrets of the gods. Then act, Harmachis, rid the land of the Roman and the Greek, and take thy place upon the throne.


So I returned to Abouthis, where I was initiated into the final mysteries.
The hour draws nigh when thou shalt be called to the throne. The great men of Egypt are gathering in the temple.
That night I was led by my father to the steps of the throne
Lords, priests and princes, I present to you the Prince Harmachis, the descendant and heir of the ancient Pharaohs.
Then my uncle rose.
Royal Harmachis, long has Egypt groaned beneath the mailed heel of the Greek and trembled at the shadow of the Roman spear; long has the ancient worship of its gods been desecrated and its people crushed with oppression. But we believe the hour of deliverance is at hand.
We call upon thee, Prince, to be the sword of our deliverance. Twenty thousand good men are sworn to rise as one at the death of Cleopatra. Thou must bring about her death, Harmachis, and with her blood anoint the royal throne of Egypt.


The dignitaries bowed before me, and I mounted the throne.
My father Amenemhat placed on my head the double crown, and about my shoulders the royal robe, and in my hands the sceptre and the scourge.
Royal Harmachis, I crown thee Pharaoh. Reign and prosper.
One by one, the dignitaries swore allegiance, made their offering to me and finally left me very weary, but a king.
My uncle Sepa moved to a house in Alexandria, for it was there that the plot was hatching. I made ready to join him and passed into my father's chamber to receive his blessing before I went.
I have searched long, striving to read the future, but it is hid from me.
But hear this, there is danger in thy path, and it comes in the form of woman. Beware, then.
Have no fear, father. My thought is set on other things.


I embraced him and went. I passed down the Nile and reached the mighty city of Alexandria, where I was conducted to my uncle's house.
All things go well. On the morrow, thou shalt see Cleopatra, for she passes in state from her palace to the temple.
In the morning, we went to take our place upon a stand that had been set up at the side of the great road down which Cleopatra was to come.
I have purchased a right for us to enter here
At length, the parade approached -- heralds and foot soldiers and horsemen, and then many fair women scattering blooming flowers.
Cleopatra comes!
I bent forward to see her, but at that moment the multitude gathered and thickened in front of me. I leapt over the barrier and pushed my way to the foremost rank.
As I did so, Nubian slaves ran up, striking the people. One struck a woman bearing a child in her arms so that she fell.


At this my blood rushed of a sudden through my veins and drowned my reason. I swung my staff aloft and smote.
With a shriek of pain and fury, he turned and sprang at me.
I smote him with my clenched fist between the eyes, and he staggered like an ox.
Again he rushed at me, but I sprang straight at his throat and gripped it. There I clung, though his fists battered me, until he grew faint for want of breath.


My uncle and others dragged me from him. I looked up and saw for the first time Cleopatra, whose chariot had been halted because of the tumult.
She said some word to her guards, who came forward and led me to her.
Who art thou, Egyptian, who darest to smite my slave?
I am Harmachis, the astrologer, who have come hither to seek my fortune. I smote thy slave because he struck down a woman.
The slave shall be punished.


The procession moved on. My uncle and I made our way back to the house. That same night, there came a knock at the door. In passed one of the beauteous girls who had stood behind Cleopatra on the chariot.
Why comest thou in this garb, Charmion? Is not the dress thy mothers wore good enough for thee?
She whom I serve will have none of our Egyptian dress, father.
See that the luxury of yonder court does not divert thine aim.
Have I not played the spy and told thee all? Have I not won the heart of the Queen, so that she refuses me nothing?
Yea. Now tell thy mission.
Thou, Harmachis, my cousin, must come to the royal household. I will make appointment for thee with Cleopatra, so that she will see thee. One day, thou must slay Cleopatra and throw wide the gates, admitting those of our party who are waiting.
At the same time, those who are sworn to thee in every city in Egypt shall rise in arms, and in ten days from the death of Cleopatra thou shalt indeed be Pharaoh.


Charmion touched my hand with her lips and went away. The following day, I arrayed myself after the fashion of an astrologer and went to meet her at the palace.
Ah, it is the astrologer The Queen would see him.
I followed Charmion to a chamber beautiful beyond imagining. At the further end, on a couch of gleaming silk, slept Cleopatra, the fairest thing that man ever saw.
Methinks that thou wilt need all thy strength to nerve thee to the deed.
With a stifled moan, Cleopatra sat up and opened her eyes.
Ah, that Harmachis who overthrew the giant. Show us of thy magic
I worked several charms, which made her gasp with wonder.
Nay, enough Thy magic overwhelms us. Thou art court astrologer from this day forward.
Cleopatra rose and left the chamber.
It goes well.


On the following day, I received the appointment of astrologer to the Queen, and was given rooms in the palace. I saw much of Cleopatra and of Charmion, also. Being innocent in such matters, I knew not that, unsought, Charmion had given me her love. One night, she came to my watch-tower
Thou must do the deed, and thou alone, tomorrow night.
Here is the list of those who, after the Queen, must be put to the sword.
Hush! What is that? I hear a sound.
Charmion ran to the door.
It is the Queen, who mounts the stair alone. I may not be found alone with thee at this hour. Where can I hide?
I motioned to a place in the wall covered by a heavy curtain, and she quickly glided behind it. Presently, there came a low knock at the door.
Enter, whoever thou art.
The latch lifted, and Cleopatra swept in.
I was minded, my astrologer, to see thee in thy haunts.
I am honoured overmuch, O Queen.


Thou art too young and handsome for this dry trade, Harmachis. But stay, what is this?
She picked up a kerchief which had fallen from Charmion's neck.
A lady's kerchief, by Isis!
I know not, indeed, how the frippery came here.
I took the thing, slipped onto the platform whence I watched the stars, and threw it to the winds of heaven.
Nay, what would the lady say could she see her love-gauge thus cost to all the world?
I saw the curtain shake. Then Cleopatra called me to her, and we sat and talked.
O Harmachis! Be thou my friend whom I can trust. Befriend me, who have courtiers, slaves, dependents, but never one single friend.
I was overcome, thinking of the morrow night. But Cleopatra thought only that I was moved by her graciousness.
It grows late. Tomorrow we will speak again.


In another moment she was gone, and I stood gazing after her like one asleep. When next I lifted my eyes, they fell upon Charmion, whom I had forgotten.
Thou didst fling away my kerchief!
What meanest thou?
I mean naught, or all, take it as thou wilt. But this Cleopatra has cast her fatal wiles about thee, and thou goest near to loving her.
I answered so fiercely that she cowered before me and wept.
Be not wrath with me, Harmachis. I speak thus by the right of the great love I bear thee. Take me to thy heart and set me by thee on the throne.
For a moment I was struck dumb.
Beware, lest thou go too far! Outside the matter of my duty, Charmion, thou art naught to me. And now, is this play done?
She shrank back.
Not altogether done. Well, waste not thine anger on a thing so vile. Farewell.


She left. The next night, she came to summon me to Cleopatra .
Are all things in order?
Yea, my Lord. Nothing has been neglected.
I rose and placed a long dagger in my robe.
Charmian, I grieve if I did pain thee last night. Thou art my friend and cousin. I can never be more to thee.
Her smile was sadder and more fateful than any stamp of grief as she led me to the Queen.
Be firm and prosper. Hormachis, fare thee well.
I drew aside the curtains and at length stood before Cleopatra, who seemed to shine as a star on the twilight's glow.
Thou art come? It is well, for I grew lonely here.
I started to pass round the couch in order that I might stab her in the back, but she stopped me.
Bide where thou art. Thy face is too comely for me to lose sight of it.


I could do nothing but hand her the papyrus I had prepared for her concerning the stars. She made pretence to read, but I saw her eyes were fixed upon me over the edge of the scroll.
Why placest thou thy hand within thy robe? Is thy heart stirred?
Yea, O Queen, it beats high.
Come sit by me, and we will talk together.
I moved near her and once again lifted my hand to clutch the dagger-hilt. But she caught my fingers with her own
Why lookest thou so wildly, Harmachis? Art sick?
Ay, sick indeed!
She drew nearer to me, and now her lips met mine.
Now pledge me one cup of wine in token of thy love
I took the drought and I drank deep. Drugged, I fell upon the couch, and Cleopatra, bending over me, drew the dagger from my robe.
I've won, and for the stake of Egypt, why, 'twas a game worth playing!


I awoke to find myself in my own chamber. Then the bolts were shot back, the door opened, and radiant came the conquering Cleopatra.
Harmachis, when thou camest to me last night, I knew that thou camest to slay. A Roman guard thou hadst bribed did inform on thee.
I could bear no more, for my heart was broken. I was a traitor. I had betrayed the cause for this woman. I flung myself on the couch and wept.
Nay, love, all is not lost for thee. Thou shalt be my counsellor and my love. Thou shalt unite me to my people, and we will reign together, thus linking the new kingdom and the old.
And those in the plot with me-- what of them?
Ay, Amenemhat, thy father; and Sepa, thy uncle.
I thought she would have said Charmion, but she named her not.
For thy sake, I will show mercy. Nay -- the price shall be a kiss.
So I kissed her, and she went, leaving the vision of her glory to strive with the shame and sorrow in my heart.


For a space of eleven days I was thus kept prisoner in my chamber. One day, Charmion entered and stood before me.
I came to tell thee that the great plot is at its utter end. All the leaders have been put in chains or driven from the land. Egypt is lost--thou didst sell her for a kiss
How comes it that thou art not betrayed but art still here to taunt me ?
My name was not on the lists. But enough, Cleopatra bids me say thou art free and that she waits thee.
So once more I came and went about the court as Cleopatra's astrologer. At length came the day which brought Quintus Dellius, a Roman, bearing letters from Mark Antony
The noble Antony bids you journey to Cilicia, there to make answer to the charge that thou hast aided his enemies
This is a heavy matter and therefore we must have time to let our judgment ripen. Thou shalt have thine answer within ten days


That same night, Cleopatra summoned me to her private chamber.
Counsel me, Hormachis. If I go not to Cilicia, Antony will fall with all his force on Egypt.
Then we'll drum him back to Rome.
But Egypt loves not me nor my Greek blood, and would as lief be ruled by the Roman. Will her men, then, arise to help me?
Still I might make defense had I gold, for with money, soldiers can be bought. But my treasuries are dry.
Perchance, Hormachis, thou who art hereditary priest of the pyramids, canst tell me where I can touch the gold to save the land from ruin.
I could show thee treasure stored by the mighty Pharaohs if thou wouldst swear to use it to defend Egypt, and for the welfare of her people.
I swear it. And we shall be wed, and together overcome the Roman.


I revealed to her somewhat of that ancient secret of the treasure hidden beneath the mass of the pyramid Her. Early the next day we set out and, by evening, stood in its shadow.
Is it here we must enter?
It is here.
Her courage began to fail her.
Canst thou not go forth with the slave and bring out the treasure?
Nay. Only the ruling monarch may draw it out, and this only if the need of Egypt is sore and strait. On his head must rest the weight of this dread deed.
I pressed a secret mark and a stone swung round, showing a little opening. As it did so, a mighty white bat flew forth.
It is the guardian spirit of the pyramid!
We entered the passage, and I led the way toward the utter silence of the tomb


We passed through several doors of granite, which I opened by touching certain stones. Finally, Cleopatra and I descended a shaft, and there before us was the sarcophagus of the divine Menkou-ro.
Where is the treasure?
We lifted the lid of the case and set it upon the floor.
There. But make sure thy heart is pure and the need of Egypt great, or the curse of Menkou-ra will fall upon thee.
Together, we drew out of the tomb beautiful ornaments of gold and many priceless emeralds.
We gathered up the mighty treasure, turned and went to the shaft. I called to the slave who had stayed above.


Getting no answer, I seized the rope and mounted it.
There burnt the lamp, but the slave I saw not. I then drew Cleopatra up. We moved down the corridor to seek the slave when the light of our lamps fell upon him--dead!
Aghast, we stood and stared as the great white bat we had seen before sailed up to us, hovered before Cleopatra's face, and then with a scream fluttered on into the tomb
We fled along the passage, having let fall our lamps into depths beneath us.
Be brave and struggle on. If the gems weight thee, cast them away.
Nay, that I will not.
Finally, we gained the entrance to the pyramid. Cleopatra sank down upon the sand motionless. I flung myself down beside her, spent


We returned to Alexandria, but there Cleopatra's mood became heavy.
Leave me, Harmachis, for I am weary.
I rose to go and yet stood wavering.
Pardon me, Cleopatra. It is of our marriage. Thou didst promise.
Tomorrow, when I have rid me of the Roman Dellius, I will name thee Cleopatra's lord before the court. Art content?
Then I went. I strove to see her again that night, but was told that Charmion was with the Queen and none might enter. On the morrow, the court met in the great hall. Dellius stood before Cleopatra.
Tell the noble Antony that we will gladly come to Cilicia in royal friendship.
I was bewildered. Moved beyond the hold of reason, I cried out.
O, Queen, remember!
She turned upon me like a lioness.
Peace, slave! Leave matters of the world to the rulers of the world!


Afterward, Cleopatra sommoned me.
Now, by whot right didst thou dore to breok in upon my talk with the Romon?
Thou didst swear to protect Egypt and thou art about to betray her to the Roman! Thou didst swear to use the treosures for the service of Egypt ond thou ort obout to use them to her shome
Thau didst swear to wed me, and thou dast reject me Therefore, I say that an thee shall fall the curse of Menkau-ro, whom thou hast robbed.
She rose in her wrath, and she was terrible to see. She struck a silver gong that hung near her, and her waiting women and her bodyguard entered.
Seize that traitor!
The captain of the guard came toward me with drawn sword. But I flew straight at his throat and dealt him such a blow that he fell headlong


I seized his sword and targe* and, as the next guard rushed at me, I smote him so that he sank down dead.
*shield
I then killed the next, and, losing sword and shield, was struggling with the last when the captain, who had once more found his sense, smote me from behind.
Sorely wounded, I could struggle no more. The slaves now threw themselves upon me and would have butchered me had not Charmion intervened
Spare him, Queen
Ay, he is a brave man. Take him to his own chamber and guard him there until he is healed or dead.


My brain reeled, and I sank into a swoon. I woke to find myself in my own chamber, so weak I scarce could lift my head.
Ah, Charmian, for all thy watching the man dies.
Cleopatra went, and Charmian came and stood over me
Thou goest whither I may not follow O, Harmachis, how gladly would I give my life for thine.
I opened my eyes.
Restrain thy grief, dear friend. I live yet.
I slept. When I woke, it was afternoon.
Tell me, when sails Cleopatra for Cilicia?
In twenty days, with such pomp and glory as Egypt has never seen. I go, also, and thou, too, because thou art Cleopatra's slave. She fears to leave thee here in Egypt.
I felt the tears roll down my cheek.
Weep not. Thou hast sown, now must thou reap. But perchance in Cilicia a way may be found by which thou mayest fly to some far land till these things are forgotten.


At length, we sailed for Cilicia. When Antony saw Cleopatra, he stood astonished at her beauty.
Behold, noble Antony. Thou hast called me, and I am come.
Each night they feasted, and I was bidden to stand behind the couch of Cleopatra like a slave
Tell me, most lovely Egypt, are the sands of the Nile of gold that thou canst night by night squander the ransom of a king upon a single feast?
I bethought me of the tomb of Menkau-ra, whose holy treasure was thus wickedly wasted, and I called out.
The hour falls. O Queen!--the hour of the coming of the curse of Menkau-ra!
Cleopatra turned on me furiously.
Thou ill-omened slave! Speak thus once more and thou shalt be scourged with rods! Sirrah, begone!


I bowed and went Charmion slipped away and followed me
Come, thou art in danger.
She led me to her chamber.
As I left the banqueting hall, I heard Cleopatra murmur to herself, "I will make an end! Tomorrow he shall be strangled!"
Thou hast lost all save life, but while life remains, remains also the chance of vengeance
Ay, it would be sweet to be avenged!
Thou must fly. Tomorrow a galley sails to Alexandria. I will find the garb of a Syrian merchant, and thou shalt safely pass the lines.
It is well.


Here is the garb, and here is a letter to the captain of the galley. Pass the guard an hour before dawn.
Too much art thou still the royal Harmachis. It must be changed.
She took her scissors and cut off my locks. Next, she found stains and rubbed them on my face and hands
Scarce myself should I know thee.
Is it time that I should go?
Not yet I have heavy words to speak to thee before thou goest.
She stood before me with folded hands. She strove to speak, and at last the words came in a hoarse whisper.
I cannot let thee go unwitting of the truth. Harmachis, 'twas I who did betray thee!


I sprang to my feet.
Be seated and hear me. I loved thee, how much thou canst little guess. But thou wast cold. Then I saw thee cast my kerchief to the winds, and I was sure thou didst love Cleopatra
A wicked spirit entered into me I went to Cleopatra and betrayed thee and our holy cause, saying that I had found a writing which thou hadst let fall, and read all therein.
She bowed her head awhile and then once more went on.
Let all my sin be told, Harmachis. Later, Cleopatra demanded of me my judgment whether she should defy Antony and wed thee or whether she should come to Antony. And I, in my jealousy, counselled her to come to Antony
Driven by my great love I have ruined thee, I have ruined Egypt and myself Slay me, Harmachis
Nay, thou must do penance through many lonely days. Thou must still abide in court and, if I yet live, I will from time to time give thee tidings. Perhaps a day may dawn when I shall need thy service.


I made my way down the stair and drew near the gate.
Who passes?
A merchant who, having brought gifts from Alexandria, now departs to his galley.
I was allowed to pass and soon reached the galley. I went aboard, and immediately we dropped swiftly down the river.
We put out to sea with a strong favouring wind that, before night, freshened to a great gale. The sailors were much afraid, but I sat little heeding, having no more love of life.
He is a wizard. Why else would he not be afraid?
We were drifting toward some terrible rocks and, certain that I was a wizard, they seized me and cast me forth as a sacrifice to the god of the sea.


I did but utter one prayer to Isis and made ready for death. But when I rose to the surface, I saw a spar of wood floating near me, to which I swam and clung.
A great wave then poured into the vessel and pressed her down into the deep, whence she rose no more.
At length, the rocky headland loomed before me, and I saw the breakers smite upon stubborn rocks.
The spar was torn from me and I sank, struggling furiously. For a moment green light streamed through the waters, and then came darkness.


Once more my life came back, and with it aching pain.
How came I hither?
We found thee cast high upon the beach and brought thee to our house. Methinks thou must lie a while, for thy left leg is broken.
We are fisherfolk. Who art thou?
I am an Egyptian traveller whose ship was sunk. I am named Olympus.
I took the name at hazard, and as Olympus I was henceforth known. Here with these fisherfolk I abode for the half of a year for it was long before my bones grew together again.
At length, a great restlessness came upon me. I left and hired myself as a sailor on a vessel sailing to Alexandria.
Has Cleopatra returned to Alexandria?
Ay, and brought Antony with her.
In Alexandria I might not abide, so I passed up the Nile to Abouthis. There I found my father dying.
Harmachis, atone! Atone! Vengeance can still be wreaked. Forgiveness may still be won. Farewell!


I stole away, and with my old nurse Atoua went north to the desolate valleys where the divine Pharaohs had hallowed out their tombs in the solid rock. In one that had been broken into by thieves, I took up my abode.
Here I worked out my penance and made atonement for my sin through prayer and meditation.
Soon the rumour was wafted about the city that a certain holy man named Olympus abode in the tomb, and hither came people bearing sick that I might cure them.
As time went on my fame was noised abroad, for it was said that I was also a magician. In the second year, I sent Atoua to Alexandria to reveal to Charmion the secret of my way of life. When she returned...
Charmion bids me tell thee that she waits for thy coming and the hour of vengeance.
In the following year, a message came from Cleopatra.
"The fame of thy renown has reached our ears. I pray thee come to me at Alexandria to counsel me."


Charmion had made my renown known to Cleopatra But I went not, although I sent Cleopatra messages and ever counselled her to her ruin At length, Octavius, who ruled the Roman Empire with Antony, declared war against him Then one night, when I had been in the tomb eight years, there came to me a vision of my father
Arise, my son! The hour of vengeance is at hand.
The next morning, the messengers of Cleopatra came up the valley.
The Queen commands thy presence at Alexandria, for she has great need of thy counsel.
I come.
Thus I came to Alexandria, and that very night Charmion came to me.
Old man, lead me to the learned Olympus
I rose and looked at her.
Surely, thou art not that --
That Harmachis whom once thy foolish heart did love. Yes, I am he.
Of the past, why, let it be. How stand things here?
Cleopatra with her fleet followed Antony to fight Octavius at Actium. Suddenly, in the midst of the battle, she fled. Antony, in his madness, followed her, leaving his fleet to be shattered. Then his great army, left without a leader, yielded to Octavius.



And where, then, is Antony?
On a little isle in the great harbour, where he lies smitten by a fever of mind Thither thou must go to cure him of his ills and draw him back to Cleopatra, for he will not see her
But first I was summoned to Cleopatra's chamber I advanced with halting gait until I stood before her couch
So thou art come at length, physician. Strange, there is that about thee which recalls what I know not Have we met before?
Never
My lord Antony is sick and crazed with grief. Do thou draw Antony back to me, and thou shalt have gifts more than thou canst count.
This thing shall be done, and I ask no reward.
I bowed and went. Ere it was yet dawn, Charmian came, and we rowed to the island where Antony lay.
We must return him to Cleopatra, else he may kill himself, and Cleopatra might then make her peace with Octavius.
When we saw Antony, he was wild with grief. I gave him a potion which had power to fire the veins of men.
My sorrows seem to roll away Once more I am Antony. There's hope!


In this fashion, then, did we draw Antony back to Cleopatra, that the ruin of the twain might be made sure
Keep Antony gay with feasts and wine, lest he brood upon his sorrows
Meanwhile, I worked upon many men of note with doubtful words, sapping their loyalty
Ask not who I may be, but send no aid to Cleopatra. Rather, you must make peace with Octavius.
Thus the time passed. Octavius drew nigh, the end was at hand
Octavius marches straight on Alexandria!
Antony sprang up and clutched Cleopatra by the arm.
Thou hast betrayed me!
It is false -- I know naught of this.


That evening, Antony went forward to a gathering of his captains.
Friends and companions in arms, though allies be fled, still is our array strong. Tomorrow we spring on Octavius, both by land and sea. Swear that ye will cling to me.
We swear.
Antony went, but I stood back watching the lords and captains as they spoke together.
It is agreed, we will cling to noble Antony.
Ay! Ay!
Then I spoke from the shadows.
Ay, cling and die!
They turned fiercely on me.
Hold a while! To you I say flee, flee to Octavius! The holy gods have told me that Antony is doomed, and Cleopatra is doomed.


On the morrow, when the galleys of Antony met the galleys of Octavius, Antony's passed over and they sailed away together.
Antony's cavalry also lowered their swords and passed over to the camp of Octavius. Antony was forced to fly to the palace.
Go thou to the Queen and say: "Antony sends greeting to Cleopatra, who has betrayed him! Greeting and farewell."
I found Cleopatra in a tomb she slept in, away from the palace.
It is a lie! Thou, Olympus, go to Antony and answer thus: "To Antony, Cleopatra, who has not betrayed him, sends greeting and farewell. Cleopatra is no more."
I found Antony in the palace.
Lord Antony, Egypt bids thee farewell. Egypt is dead by her own hand.
Dead! And shall she outdo me in courage at the last?
He drew his sword, plunged it into his body and fell, groaning, on the couch.


Word was sent to Cleopatra, who was yet living. She summoned Antony to her, and he died in her arms. Octavius entered Alexandria. A little while after ...
I have heard that in three days Octavius will send thee to Rome to feast the eyes of the Roman mob and be led in triumph to the Capitol.
Never will I walk in chains in Octavius' triumph! What must I do, Charmian ?
Lady, thou canst die.
So the Queen willed it. I brewed a deadly draught and, on the morrow, gave it to Cleopatra. She drank and cast the goblet to the ground.
What's this ? I grow cold, but I die not.
Presently. First I would have thee know me. The curse of Menkau-ra hath fallen! Look upon me, woman! Who am I?
Harmachis!
She fell and died. Then Charmion took what was left of the poison.
I lived on to serve thee. Now no more thou needst me, and I go. After thee, I loved her best of all.


She drank and fell dead. I departed from Alexandria in a vessel I had made ready. At Abouthis, I found all the high priests gathered together to celebrate the feast of Isis.
Go and tell the priests I would be led before the council!
I was led in and took my stand on the spot where once I had been crowned Pharaoh.
Perchance you remember Harmachis, who was crowned Pharaoh, betrayed his cause, and sold himself to Cleopatra. Holy sirs -- I am that Harmachis!
So in cold, clear words I laid bare all my shame, keeping back nothing. As I spoke, I saw their faces grow more hard.
For all thy sins thou knowest there is but one reward. We doom thee to the doom. Go to thy dungeon and await the falling of its stroke!
They led me to the prison chamber, and here I wait my doom, but not without hope that I shall yet find forgiveness.
The End

H. RIDER HAGGARD



Although Sir Henry Rider Haggard is remembered today as a novelist, he was, in his lifetime, a secretary to the British colonial government in South Africa, an ostrich farmer, a lawyer and an agricultural expert. It was for his writings on agriculture and not his novels that he was knighted in 1912.

He was born in England on June 22, 1856. In 1875, when he was nineteen, he went to South Africa as a secretary to the British governor of Natal. He resigned from the government service in 1879 to take up ostrich farming. Ostriches were raised in South Africa for their feathers, which were then fashionable as ornaments and fans for ladies. In his later years, he wrote of his experiences: "The ostrich is an extremely troublesome bird. It hunts you and knocks you down. When attacked by an ostrich, the only thing to do is to lie down flat. In this position, it cannot strike you with its feet nor is its beak adapted to pecking, so it can and does dance upon you and sit upon your head as though it were an egg which it wanted to hatch."

After two years, Haggard gave up his farm, returned to England and obtained a law degree in 1884. He never was a very active lawyer though, because in 1885, he published *King Solomon's Mines*, which was so successful that he no longer had to worry about money.

Haggard wrote his novels quickly, and said that they were written only to earn money. His real interest, he said, was in farming and labor colonies. But he thought enough of his literary works to name his three daughters after three of his heroines, and by the time he died, in 1925, he had over forty novels to his credit.

Haggard spent much of his time traveling, especially in Africa, to gather material for his books. He visited the pyramids in Egypt and made them the background for *Cleopatra*, which he wrote in 1887. In his autobiography, *Days of My Life*, he told how he used his experiences. "From Cairo I proceeded up the Nile, inspecting all the temples and tombs of the kings at Thebes. When first I was there I remember struggling down one of them, led by dim torches, and I remember also the millions of bats that must be beaten away. I can see them now, those bats, weaving veils, dancers in a ghostly dance. Indeed afterwards, I incarnated them all in the great bat that was a spirit which haunted the pyramid where Cleopatra and Harmachis sought the treasure of Menkau-ra."

Haggard believed that writers should visit the places they intended to describe in their books. He wrote, "If a man wishes to produce a really good romance dealing with some past epoch, the best thing he can do is to see the land in which the folk lived and soak himself in the surroundings that were their surroundings. So he may hope to catch something of the atmosphere which doubtless they took for their native earth and skies. Then, if he possesses any, imagination may do the rest."

THE ROMAN POWER STRUGGLE

"*Et tu, Brute!*"

With these words, Julius Caesar, ruler of the Roman world, spoke his last to Marcus Brutus. Caesar fell, slain. His assassins, daggers in their hands, clustered about him, startled by their own act.

Led by Brutus and Cassius, they had killed Caesar to gain control of Rome. Rome, at that time, ruled vast territories spreading out from the capital in several directions.

Mark Antony arose before the populace to deliver a funeral oration over the body of Caesar. He recalled to the people Caesar's military triumphs in Gaul and spoke of the unique nature of the leader now dead. He accused the assassins of treason.

His impassioned speech so infuriated the crowd that they left him to run amuck through the city. The assassins had to flee for their lives in the anarchy and civil strife that followed. Rome was now without a ruler.

Antony restored order and took up the reins of leadership. But he was soon challenged by Octavius, the nephew of Caesar. Octavius and his followers fought against Antony at Mutina in 43 B.C. Antony's army was forced to give way.

The two leaders later agreed to join together, instead of fighting each other. They vowed vengeance against Brutus and Cassius, who had raised armies in the eastern provinces.

Antony and Octavius led their forces into northern Greece where, on the plains of Philippi, they met and routed their enemies. Both Brutus and Cassius took their own lives rather than be captured.

The rule of the Roman world now lay between Octavius and Antony. They chose to separate. Octavius returned to Rome to rule the western provinces while Antony remained in the east to rule the eastern provinces. To help strengthen their alliance, Antony married the sister of Octavius.

A year before, Antony had met the Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt, Cleopatra. The Ptolemies were Greek rulers of Egypt descended from a Greek general who governed the area after the death of Alexander the Great, who had conquered it. Cleopatra was an Egyptian-born Greek.

In 36 B.C., Antony left his wife and married Cleopatra. Together, they decided to oppose Octavius. Rome declared war on Egypt. A decisive naval battle was fought at Actium off the western coast of Greece in 31 B.C. Antony's army surrendered shortly afterward, when Antony left his troops to follow Cleopatra back to Egypt.

In the following year, Antony committed suicide. Cleopatra also killed herself, after failing to win the love of Octavius. Egypt came under Rome's dominion, and Octavius, renamed Augustus, became the first emperor of the Roman Empire.

THE REALM OF THE DEAD

It must have been because they loved life so much that the Egyptians took such great care of their dead. Splendid, expensive tombs were built, and long rituals of religion and magic were held at burial time only to make the dead person enjoy as many experiences after death as he had enjoyed in life.

The Egyptians had many beliefs about life after death. They thought that a dead man could live again on earth in his own body or as an animal, or in the heavens as a star. People feared the magic of the dead. They believed that the dead could inhabit the body of a sick man. But most of all, they believed that after death, everyone would become the god of the dead, Osiris.

Osiris himself had heen murdered by his brother Set. But he was believed to live again in the underworld as King of the dead. People prayed that he would give life after death to them. Osiris was always shown in human form, swathed in linen like a mummy. A dead man was spoken of as "the Osiris so-and-so," just as though he and the great god of the dead were identical.

Tombs, including the gigantic pyramids, were built in the western desert, where the sun was seen to set. On the walls of the tombs, artists carved pictures and inscriptions to help the dead man meet his next life and also to celebrate his earthly deeds. The pictures usually showed the dead man's daily activities, so that the illusion of living would be preserved.

Utensils, furniture, jewelry, weapons, musical instruments and food were placed in the burial chamber for the use of the dead. Statuettes of servants were supposed to perform the menial work.

The most important part of the tomb was the mummy itself. Rich men would undergo a complicated process of mummification when they died that might take as long as seventy days. The corpse was treated with asphalt and natron, a mineral, and wound in linen bandages, with a mask on the face. The mummy was laid on its side like a sleeper, the head supported by a head rest. The oldest mummy found in Egypt is believed to he over three thousand years old.

The Egyptians mummified not only human beings hut sacred animals—hirds, reptiles, fishes and even insects.

Mummies have helped scientists to discover many facts about Egyptian history and medical knowledge. Archeologists are ahle to determine what diseases existed in ancient Egypt and what surgical and medical processes were known. The articles found in the tomhs have told us much about one of the earliest civilizations of man.